

Break the Cycle of Sin

by Adam Willingham

A young Christian man struggled with temptations of lust. At a weak point he visited a pornographic website, then again the next day. He soon became addicted to this sin. As a result, his grades began to suffer. He also began lying to his parents to cover up his sin. Once they discovered the truth, they disciplined him severely. Resolved to repent, the young man sought help, installed a filter on his devices, and quit viewing pornography — for a while. Then the temptation came back and the cycle started all over again.

This hypothetical story happens in real life all the time — and not only with pornography. It happens with all manner of sin. We get trapped in a vicious cycle of immorality that we can't seem to get out of. When we do manage to break the cycle, it's only a matter of time until we get pulled right back into it again. And again.

This problem is a microcosm of the cycle of sin the Israelites experienced as a nation during the period of the Judges. The cycle looked like this: apostasy, affliction, repentance, deliverance, peace. When the Israelites finally experienced peace for a while, the cycle would start over again.

Aren't we just like that sometimes? Despite the terrible consequences of sin we see and experience, for some strange reason we head right back into it. The reason we do this is simple: **we like sin** — just like the Israelites, just like the porn addict. So how do we break the cycle of sin? Here are three simple steps:

Learn To Hate Sin

Proactively cultivate an attitude of abhorrence and disgust for sin (Psalm 119:104 — *“Through Your precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way”*). Then sin will lose its appeal because you won't view it as pleasurable. How could you enjoy something you hate, something that destroys your hope of Heaven and ruins your life?

Remember The Past

Don't be forgetful like the Israelites. Look back and bring to mind all the pain your sinful behavior has brought into your life. Use that knowledge as motivation to avoid sin in the future (Romans 6:21 — *“What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death”*).

Be Prepared For The Future

When you're experiencing a time of spiritual peace, realize that Satan is never going to give up. He'll be back sooner or later to try and pull you back into sin. Never let your guard down (Proverbs 4:23 — *“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life”*). Look to the horizon and always be ready for Satan's next attack (Proverbs 22:3 — *“A prudent man foresees evil and hides himself, But the simple pass on and are punished (Proverbs 22:3).*

Break the cycle of sin today, relying on the strength of the One who overcame all sin: Jesus Christ!

— via Palm Springs Drive Church of Christ
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